services of nongovernmental organisations/self-help groups, micro-finance institutions (other than Non-bank Financial Companies) and other civil society organisations as intermediaries in providing financial and banking services; policy initiatives to facilitate diversification of business operation of regional rural banks into new areas; agreements between banks and postal authorities for using post offices as business correspondents; several initiatives for improving delivery of customer services; and, constitution of State-specific Working Groups to explore possibilities of greater financial inclusion.

Shopping Tourism in India

*271. MS. PRAMILA BOHIDAR:
SHRI B.J. PANDA:

Will the Minister of TOURISM be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is proposed to launch shopping tourism in the country to who foreign tourists in a Public Private Partnership mode;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether Bhubaneswar in Orissa is also one of the places where this project would be launched;

(d) if so, the details thereof; and

(e) what are the details of other measures that are proposed to be worked out to boost tourism in Orissa to improve the economy of this region?

THE MINISTER OF TOURISM (SHRIMATI AMBIKA SONI): (a) to (e) The Ministry of Tourism, Government of India is constantly developing new products and themes including Shopping for promotion of tourism in India. The Ministry of Tourism extends financial assistance to the State Governments/Union Territory Administrations including Orissa for organizing promotional events, fairs and festivals. These events also provide an appropriate platform for exhibition and sale of items of art and craft. In addition, the Ministry provides financial assistance for organizing Tourism-cum-Handicraft-cum-Cultural events on a regional basis with the aim of creating a larger platform for showcasing India's culture and heritage and facilitating sale of art and craft products. In the year 2007, the Ministry of Tourism has extended financial assistance for organizing a mega craft and cultural fair in Bhubaneswar.

During the Xth Five Year Plan the Ministry of Tourism has sanctioned an amount of Rs. 7235.39 lakh for 37 tourism projects to the Government of Orissa for development and promotion of tourism in the State including projects for events promoting culture and handicrafts.

During the current financial year the Ministry has sanctioned financial assistance for Rs. 2760.45 lakh for 11 tourism projects to the Government of Orissa for development and promotion of tourism in the State.

Smuggling of Antique Statues of Gods

*272. SHRIMATI HEMA MALINI: Will the Minister of CULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that priceless treasures like antique statues of Gods and Goddesses, invaluable sculpture are being regularly smuggled abroad under the grab of replicas from villages of Rajasthan, Orissa, Chattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, Uttarakhand and Tamil Nadu;

(b) if so, the number of such antiques smuggled so far, State-wise;